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Author(s): Robert W. Ackerman

Source: *Speculum*, Jul., 1944, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jul., 1944), pp. 285-313

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Medieval Academy of America

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2853331>

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THE KNIGHTING CEREMONIES IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES

By ROBERT W. ACKERMAN

I

THE ceremony of knighting was a highly important event in the life of the feudal noble of the later Middle Ages because it signalized not only his fitness to wield the knightly weapons, but also his legal majority.¹ One is scarcely surprised, then, to find that the Middle English romances, since their heroes belong invariably to the aristocratic or knightly class,² contain many interesting allusions to, and descriptions of, the knighting ritual. The knighting, in fact, is one of the spectacular features of the times which romance composers often represent in their poems.

Along with the portrayal of other mediaeval customs and manners in the romances, however, these accounts of the knighting ceremonial are open to the charge of being 'fanciful.'³ Some writers hold that the old romances 'outrage the truth in their extravagant pictures of chivalry'; others that the romances present a reliable picture of their times.⁴ Neither opinion, it would seem, rests upon a systematic investigation of the facts. Thus, in the present paper, the purpose is to determine the completeness and accuracy with which the English romance composers represent one important aspect of their times — the knighting ceremony. Such a study involves, of course, a comparison of the *adoubements* of the heroes of romance with what is known about the historical ceremony of knighting.

¹ 'En effet, aux XI^e et XII^e siècles, c'était seulement à la suite de cette cérémonie [knighting ceremony] qu'il devenait majeur; jusque-là sa capacité juridique restait en suspens,' Paul Guilhiermoz, *Essai sur l'origine de la noblesse en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1902), p. 395.

² The heroes of romance are always feudal nobles and generally men of great estate and importance. Noble or 'free' birth as a requisite for knighthood, then, is an aspect of mediaeval society of which romance writers were fully conscious. Men of low birth are not represented in the romances as being honored by knighthood save when humor is intended, as in the knighting of such ignoble louts as Rauf Coilgear and the Carl of Carlyle. In such poems as *Sir Perceval of Gales*, *Libeaus Desconus*, and *Octovian*, the principle of eligibility for knighthood receives exaggerated expression, for noble birth is depicted as carrying with it certain of the conventional knightly virtues. Not only do several high-born youths, unaware through tricks of fate of their true station in life, display a natural impulse to become knights, but they seem to possess as their birthright great dexterity with the weapons of the knight. Octovian is even described as exhibiting the natural aversion of the aristocrat to trade and money.

³ Bishop Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762, ed. Edith Morley (London, 1911), p. 146. In Bishop Hurd's opinion, many contemporary scholars concur: Ernest Albert Baker in *The History of the English Novel: The Age of Romance . . .* (London, 1924), pp. 11-49; Rowland Edmund Prothero, Lord Ernle, in *The Light Reading of Our Ancestors* (London, 1927), pp. 72-85; George Wyndham in *Essays in Romantic Literature by George Wyndham*, ed. Charles Whibley (London, 1919), pp. 5-41; and Reinald Hoops in *Der Begriff 'Romance' in der mittellenglischen und frühneuenglischen Literatur, Anglistische Forschungen*, Heft 68 (Heidelberg, 1929), p. 54.

⁴ Charles Victor Langlois, *La Société française au XIII^e siècle d'après dix romans d'aventure* (2nd ed., Paris, 1904), especially p. iii; Jean Baptiste de la Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie considérée comme un établissement politique et militaire* (Paris, 1759), II, 107-137; and Charles Mills, *The Story of Chivalry or Knighthood and Its Times* (London, 1825), I, 97.

Such other phases of knighthood as the chivalric education are considered to form separate subjects and will not be treated here.

There are approximately one hundred pieces of narrative literature, not counting variant forms, which are classified as romances.¹ Of the ninety-three² examined for this study, forty-nine were found to include no account³ of a knighting. As might be expected of romances based on Celtic fairy stories having little to do with chivalry, the so-called Breton *lais* — *Lai le Frein*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Emare*, and *Sir Launfal* — contain no dubbings. On the other hand, some of the romances setting forth ancient narrative material, such as the fall of Troy, or the legendary career of Alexander, depict rather fully the knighting ritual of the late Middle Ages. In general, it may be said that the stories in which knightings are most likely to be found are those which dwell in some detail on the *enfances* or youthful years of their heroes.

Forty-four Middle English romances contain accounts of one to ten separate knightings which vary considerably in fullness and explicitness. Many of the allusions to knightings, however, are no more than terse statements to the effect that the ceremony takes place. In some of these allusions, the knighting is indicated by the word *dub*:

Mi-self shal dubbe him to knith,
For-þi þat he is so with.⁴

Bote to armure bryzt wol y me ta.
ffor þy, sire kyng, now pray y þe,
Dobbe me knyzt, par charite.⁵

Here, *dub* seems to refer to the entire ceremony, but in other passages, to be discussed later, the term denotes a specific act of the knighting. As used in connection with the knightly investiture, *dub*, both in its Middle English and Old French forms, has a complex history, which is set forth in a recent paper by the present writer.⁶

Besides *dub*, two other expressions are often used to tell us that a knighting takes place:

¹ The list of romances followed here is that given in John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400* (New Haven [Conn.], 1916), pp. 1-163.

² The following pieces listed by Wells were omitted because of their inaccessibility or their fragmentary state: the Fillingham *Otuel*, the Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment, the Rawlinson *Siege of Thebes*, and *Titus and Vespasian or the Destruction of Jerusalem*.

³ Although no dubbings take place in these forty-nine stories, casual allusions to knighting and knighthood are frequent. Thus, in *Athelstone*, the king pretends to offer knighthood to the two sons of the Earl of Stane, and in *The Romance of Parthenay*, there is an interesting discussion of the relative merits of knighthood and holy orders.

⁴ *The Lay of Havelok*, ed. W. W. Skeat, *EETSES*, IV (1868), vv. 2042-2043.

⁵ *The Seege or Batayle of Troye*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, *EETS*, CLXXII (1927), Lincoln's Inn MS, vv. 1303-1305.

⁶ 'Dub in the Middle English Romances,' *The Research Studies of the State College of Washington*, IX (1941). In this paper, it is pointed out that Middle English *dub*, when used in connection with knightly investiture, has four distinct meanings. In addition to the conventionally accepted meanings of (1) to create a knight, and (2) to give the accolade with the sword, *dub* may further signify (3) to give the accolade with hand or fist, and (4) to invest with the sword, although about this last meaning there is less certainty.

Horn adoun con lyhte
& made hem alle to knyhte.¹

And Ordre of knyht took this Galas
Of Nasciens that Stille Abod In that plas.²

Sometimes, two of these expressions are combined:

. . . hys sone is now of late dowbed & made knight.³

The passages just cited may scarcely be said to convey a picture, such as the romance composers must have had in mind, of the process of creating a knight. In all probability, the romance writers, whenever they used the expressions 'to dub a knight,' 'to make a knight,' or 'to take the order of knight,' expected their audiences to read the missing details into their narratives.

In passages occurring in no fewer than forty romances, however, these unenlightening phrases are accompanied by hints as to the sort of ceremony the romance writers must have visualized, and even, in a few instances, by admirable descriptions of virtually the entire ritual. The present study is, naturally, based on this group of forty romances.

In *Die Formalitäten des Ritterschlags in der altfranzösischen Epik*, Karl Treis⁴ has studied the rituals in Old French romance. Although the data which he draws from eighty-four Old French poems are systematically arranged and carefully presented, Treis, in estimating the amount of distortion represented in the romances, often relies upon broad, uncritical assumptions as to the mediaeval ceremonies actually used. In order to determine more soundly the extent to which the *adoubements* of the knights of romance are fanciful inventions of the poets, one must compare them with detailed and fully substantiated accounts of historical usage.

Unfortunately, existing treatments of the historical ceremony are not entirely adequate for the purpose of comparison. Either they are insufficiently detailed, or their writers have turned to the romances for assistance in developing their

¹ *King Horn*, ed. Joseph Hall (Oxford, 1901), Harleian MS. vv. 521-522. See also *Libeaus Desconus*, in *The Percy Folio Manuscript*, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1867-68), II, 404-499, v. 51; *The History of the Holy Grail*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and Dorothy Kempe, *EETS*, XX, XXIV, XXVIII, XXX, XCV (1877, 1878, 1905), Chap. XII, v. 170; Thomas Malory, *Morte Darthur*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer (London, 1889-91), I, 41, 69, 280, 339-340, 451, 613; *The Siege of Melayne*, ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, *EETS*, XXXV (1880), v. 1414; *Octovian*, in *Metrical Romances*, ed. Henry Weber (Edinburgh, 1810), III, 155-239, vv. 1867-1868; *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, in *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, ed. Joseph Ritson (Edinburgh, 1884-85), III, 46 ff., vv. 413-415; and *Generydes*, ed. W. Aldis Wright, *EETS*, LV, LXX (1878), vv. 1842-1843.

² *The History of the Holy Grail*, ed. cit., Chap. LIII, vv. 57-58. See also *Morte Darthur*, ed. cit., I, 218; *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, *EETS*, XCVII, CIII, CVI (1906, 1908, 1910), Book V, v. 1488; *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer (London, 1904), I, 316; *Sir Degrevant*, in *The Thornton Romances*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell, The Camden Society (London, 1844), pp. 177-256, vv. 873-876; and *Sir Torrent of Portyngale*, ed. E. Adam, *EETS*, LI (1887), vv. 1107-1112.

³ *Melusine*, ed. A. K. Donald, *EETS*, LXVIII (1895), p. 72.

⁴ Dissertation, Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, Berlin, 1887.

picture of knighting.¹ It has been found necessary, then, to supplement the work of historians with accounts of *adoubements* which the present writer has been able to collect from a number of chronicles.

Before the various phases of the romance knightings may be properly discussed in connection with historical parallels, however, a brief sketch of the background of the ritual is necessary.

Historians are of the opinion that the knighting ritual of the later Middle Ages is a development of the maturity rite used by ancient Germanic tribes.² According to an often quoted passage in the *Germania* of Tacitus, youths who were old enough to take part in war were ceremoniously presented with arms by a chief.³ That the use of the maturity rite continued into the ninth century is indicated by scattered chronicle entries, but the only act of the ceremony that is distinctly mentioned is belting on the sword.⁴ The development of the feudal order in, roughly speaking, the tenth century transformed the primitive maturity rite into the knighting ceremony. At first, the maturity ritual was regarded by the early barons of the feudal period as marking the attainment of legal age.⁵ As time passed, however, a distinction grew up between feudal lords who, at least in youth, led the life of a warrior and those who did not. The former alone were called knights,⁶ and they seem quite regularly to have symbolized their choice of

¹ The most complete discussion of the ceremony of knighting is to be found in Léon Gautier's *La chevalerie*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1895), Chapters VII–VIII. This writer, however, not only depends to some extent on the evidence of romance, but his work has been condemned by Langlois (*op. cit.*, introduction) as 'une foule d'opinions religieuses et morales, personnelles à l'auteur.' The same general objections apply to the use here of the work of other historians of chivalry: Sir Walter Scott, G. P. R. James, Henry Stebbing, Francis Warre-Cornish, Walter Meller, and Kenelm Henry Digby. Still another rather notable work in the same class is Alwin Schultz's *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1889.

² The ancient Teutonic origins of the knighting are discussed by such historians as Edward Augustus Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England, Its Causes and Its Results* (Oxford, 1876), v, 482–486; George G. Coulton, *The Mediaeval Scene* (New York, 1931), pp. 57 ff.; H. O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*, 4th ed. (New York, 1925), I, 538 ff.; Gautier, *op. cit.*, Chapter VII; and E. F. Jacobs, 'The Beginnings of Medieval Chivalry,' *Chivalry*, ed. E. Prestage (London, 1928), pp. 37–55.

³ 'Nihil autem neque publicae neque privatae rei nisi armati agunt. Sed arma sumere non ante cuiquam moris, quam civitas suffecturum probaverit. Tum in ipso concilio vel principum aliquis vel pater vel propinquus scuto frameaque iuvenem ornant: haec apud illos toga, hic primus iuventutis honos; ante hoc domos pars videntur, mox rei publicae.' In *Taciti de Vita Iulii Agricolaë and de Germania*, ed. Alfred Gudemann, revised ed. (New York, 1928), p. 35, par. 13.

⁴ In the commentary of the Delphine edition of Tacitus (Paris, 1686), IV, 45–46, several occurrences of the maturity rite are quoted from early chronicles. Paul the Deacon speaks of the custom as prevailing among the Lombards in about 800, and two passages in the *Vita Ludovici Pii* under date of 791 and 838 refer to belting on the sword ('accinctus est,' and 'ense cinxit').

⁵ Guilhaume, *op. cit.*, pp. 393–395.

⁶ The term 'knight' (OE *cniht*), after the Norman Conquest, came to refer specifically to fighting men of the landlord class who could afford a war-horse and the equipment of a mounted soldier. F. J. C. Hearnshaw, 'Chivalry and Its Place in History,' *Chivalry*, ed. Prestage, pp. 3 ff. During the Middle Ages, the mounted soldier protected by body armor enjoyed an immense advantage over the humble foot-soldier. This advantage seems to have lasted until the development of the Welsh long-bow and of gunpowder in the fourteenth century. See Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War*

profession by submitting to the investment with arms which now came to be associated specifically with the military aristocracy.¹

Of the exact nature of the knighting ceremony in use during the early years of the feudal period not much is known. One panel of the Bayeux Tapestry, it is true, portrays the knighting of King Harold by William of Normandy, but one cannot be sure what ritualistic act might be here represented. It may be that Duke William is engaged in fastening the young king's helm.² Again, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the date 1085 reports, but with no details, the dubbing of Henry by William I.³ In the Latin chronicles in which royal knightings are frequently mentioned, such phrases as these are used: 'militaribus armis accinxit,' and 'cingulo militiae accinctus est.'⁴ One judges, then, that the suzerain, as the principal act of the early ritual, belted a sword about the candidate's waist. Other records which will be quoted presently reveal that the later ceremony was more elaborate, including such additional acts as investment with spurs, the accolade, and a concluding formula uttered by the lord conferring the honor. A feast and celebration often followed the actual knighting.

The ceremony could take place either in the hall of the suzerain or, as Sainte-Palaye, an early historian of chivalry, points out, on the battlefield.⁵ The battlefield ceremony, in fact, is rather often mentioned in the chronicles.

Moreover, after the development of the Christian concept of chivalry, the ritual was frequently held in a church. In the opinion of historians, Christian knighthood came into being in the twelfth century.⁶ Always interested in restraining the warlike nobles of feudal Europe, the Church sponsored several measures in the tenth and eleventh centuries designed to secure some degree of peace and order.⁷ But the beginning of the Crusades in 1095 offered an especially effective

(New York and London, 1898), pp. 193-195 and 583-634, and Gustav Köhler, *Die Entwicklung des Kriegswesens und der Kriegführung in der Ritterzeit von Mitte des 11. Jahrhunderts bis zu den Hussitenkriegen* (Breslau, 1886), III, 1. Teil, 215-262.

¹ In Oman's opinion, it was not until after the Norman Conquest that all knights were nobly born and had gone through the ceremony of admission to knighthood. *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

² Plate XXV. This panel is captioned 'Hic Willelm: dedit Haroldo arma.' Frank Rede Fowkes, *The Bayeux Tapestry Reproduced in Autotype with Historical Notes*, London, 1875.

³ 'Her se cyng . . . dubbade his sunu Henric to ridere þær,' Ed. Earle and Plummer (Oxford, 1889), I, 216-217.

⁴ In the Latin chronicles, the usual forms for recording a knighting are 'cingulum accepit,' 'arma dedit,' or 'militiae cingulo accinxit.' See William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed. Richard Howlett, Rolls Series (London, 1884), p. 70, for a record of the knighting of Prince Henry by King David at Carlisle in 1149, and *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Howlett, Rolls Series (London, 1884-89), III, 132, for the dubbing of Eustace by King John in 1147.

⁵ Sainte-Palaye, *op. cit.*, II, 107-137, observes that knightings which occur both before and after battle are to be found in French romances and in history.

⁶ See Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 ff., Taylor, *op. cit.*, I, 544-551, and Sidney Painter, 'The Ideas of Chivalry,' *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine*, XXIII (1935), 218-232. More systematic accounts of the development of Christian chivalry are to be found in Köhler, *op. cit.*, III, 66 ff., and Achille Luchaire, *Les Premiers Capétiens (987-1137)* (Paris, 1911), in *Histoire de France*, ed. Ernest Lavisse (Paris, 1900-1911), pp. 139-140.

⁷ The two most famous of these measures were the *Pax Dei* of the tenth century, and the *Truga*

means of subduing the military barons, or at least of diverting their energies into channels sanctioned by the Church.¹ As the necessity of continuing the warfare against the infidel became apparent, a Christian theory of knighthood was formulated and preached by such Churchmen as Ramon Lull. In the terms of this theory, the knightly order served as the arm of the Church, and the ordination ritual became, as Léon Gautier has said, the 'eighth sacrament.'² That is, not only were knightings occasionally held in a church, but to the secular ritual already discussed were added several acts symbolic of the dedication of the new knight to Christian purposes. Moreover, clergy sometimes assisted in conferring the honor.³

The sources *par excellence* of our knowledge of the Christian concept of knighthood and of the sacerdotal knighting ceremony are the so-called manuals of chivalry — a group of treatises written during the thirteenth century and later, in which knighthood is systematically dealt with as a Christian institution. Among the treatises that have come down to us, the two most important for present purposes are the work of a thirteenth and fourteenth century Majorcan, Ramon Lull, translated by Caxton as *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*,⁴ and an anonymous French poem of the early thirteenth century, *L'Ordene de chevalerie*.⁵ Similar works are *L'Enseignement des Princes* of Robert de Blois,⁶ and *Livre des manières* of Étienne de Fougères,⁷ but the ordination ritual is not described in these last-named treatises.

In Lull's work, an ordination ritual consisting of the following steps is carefully outlined: (1) an all-night vigil before the altar; (2) attendance at mass the next morning, after which the candidate is to swear the oath of chivalry to the priest (the 'knyght espyrytuel'), and listen to a sermon on the articles of faith, the commandments, and the sacraments; (3) the girding on of the sword by the 'knigt terryen'; (4) the ceremonial kiss by the 'knigt terryen'; and (5) the public announcement including a feast and tournament.⁸

Nevertheless, it would be as rash to assume that this ideal procedure was regularly followed in actual *adoubements* as to conclude that the Christian concept

Dei, 1027. For a discussion of the latter, see James Westfall Thompson, *An Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages, 300-1500* (New York, 1928), pp. 666-669.

¹ 'Au lieu de légiférer contre les infracteurs de la paix, ne valait-il pas mieux prévenir le mal en agissant de bonne heure sur l'imagination et sur le cœur du jeune noble, de manière à ce qu'il fût pénétré de son devoir de chrétien? L'Église essaya de se faire l'éducatrice du soldat, d'entretenir dans une des circonstances décisives de la vie du guerrier féodal au moment où, devenu homme fait, il acquiert le droit de porter l'épée et de s'en servir comme chevalier. En donnant à cette solennité la valeur d'une cérémonie religieuse et même d'un haut enseignement moral, le prêtre espéra discipliner d'avance la turbulente aristocratie que la crainte des châtimens célestes ne suffisait pas à contenir: elle ne l'a pas créée,' Luchaire, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140. ² *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

³ A collection of historical instances of the creation of knights by churchmen is to be found in Walter Meller, *A Knight's Life in the Days of Chivalry* (London, 1924), pp. 47-48.

⁴ Ed. Alfred T. P. Byles, *EETS*, CLXVIII (1926).

⁵ Ed. Roy Temple House, Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1918.

⁶ In *Robert von Blois, Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Jacob Ulrich (Berlin, 1889-95), III, 1-78.

⁷ Ed. Ferdinand Talbot, Université libre d'Angers, Paris, 1877.

⁸ *Ed. cit.*, pp. 66-125.

of chivalry effected a complete reform of the mediaeval feudatory.¹ On the other hand, there are indications that religious acts were used in some fairly early knighting ceremonies. Gautier, for example, speaks of the existence of certain eleventh century religious formulas for the *benedictio novi militis*.² John of Salisbury, interested mainly in defining the religious obligations of chivalry, speaks of placing the sword on the altar, presumably as one act in the *adoubement*,³ and a very similar statement occurs in a letter of Peter de Blois: 'Sed et hodie tirones enses suos recipiunt de altari, ut profiteantur se filios Ecclesiae . . .'.⁴ On the basis of these statements, it would seem that one of the steps in the religious ceremony actually used was laying the sword on the altar. In other accounts, to be cited later, the candidates are described as holding vigil the night before their ordination.

The foregoing brief survey of the knighting ceremony of the Middle Ages provides an outline for the presentation of the *adoubements* described in the Middle English romances. That is, the following order will be maintained in the ensuing discussion:

1. Scene of the knighting
 - i. The court ceremony
 - ii. The battlefield ceremony
 - iii. The church ceremony
2. Ceremonial acts of the secular knighting
 - i. Investment with the sword
 - ii. Investment with the spurs
 - iii. The accolade
 - iv. The formula
 - v. The concluding feast and celebration
 - vi. Other phases of the secular knighting
3. Special religious acts
 - i. The vigil
 - ii. Dedication of the sword
 - iii. Other phases of the religious ceremony

The romance treatment of each of the above features of the knighting will be compared with accounts of that feature in the chronicles and the historians of chivalry. Also, consideration will be given those aspects of the ceremony appearing in historical accounts but not in the romances, and to those romance descriptions for which no historical parallels are known.

¹ Luchaire has asked ' . . . Mais comment pourrait-on prouver que le code chevaleresque a jamais été observé dans la pratique?' *Op. cit.*, p. 143. Since knighthood was never, strictly speaking, an 'order,' like the Templars, with a definitely formulated and closely observed *regula*, it is probable that a great diversity of practices prevailed in church knightings.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 296-303. Gautier declares that the *benedictio novi militis* or the religious knighting ceremony was probably not introduced into France before the twelfth century, and that it probably did not come into use until the thirteenth century, the time of Louis IX. *Ibid.*, p. 300. Professor Painter has been unable to find additional evidence. 'The Ideas of Chivalry,' p. 219.

³ *Polyeraticus*, Lib. vi, cap. 6, in *Patriologiae Latinae*, ed. Migne, cxcix, col. 602.

⁴ Epistola xciv to Archdeacon John, in *PL*, ccvii, coll. 293-294.

II

1. SCENE OF THE KNIGHTING

i. The court ceremony

Romance data: In the Middle English romances, a great many *adoubements*, as is indicated sometimes by direct statement, take place in the suzerain's hall:

The gentyls that come hym tylle,
Then they were fulle fayne to do hys wylle.
He gave them ordurs sone;
Yn the halle that he there hadd,
V. and thretty knyghtys he madd.¹

Befoir mony worthie he dubbit him Knycht,
Dukis and digne Lordis in that deir hall.²

More often, however, the hall as the scene of the ceremony is indicated by the fact that the young candidate appears in his lord's court to request knighthood and then receives it on the spot:

And he saide: 'lordynges, by my faye,
I ame ouer symple to 3ow to saye,
Where euer 3e will me sende.
I aske ordir of knyghte þer till;
Bot giffe 3our giftis where 3e will,
Elles 3e be my frende.'
Thay made hym knyghte with full gud chere,
He tuke leue at þe tuelue du3epere
this curtayse knyghte & hende.³

One suspects, from the absence of any allusions to religious acts or to an ecclesiastical setting, that the scene of many other ceremonies is also the hall.

Historical data: References to court knightings are numerous in the chronicles. The dubbings of Harold and of Henry I, already mentioned, were probably held in the ducal hall and the king's palace respectively. A clearer historical example of a hall knighting is to be found in the Great French chronicle which recounts the career of the distinguished regent, William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. Young William is described as standing before the Chamberlain of Tancarville in 1167 amid a goodly number of lords as he receives knighthood.⁴ In 1264, Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, seems also to have received his spurs in a court ceremony. The lord who conferred the honor was Simon de Montfort.⁵ As in the romances, there are many other notices of dubbings which, in the absence of specific details to the contrary, may be assumed to indicate rituals that were held in the great hall of a king or noble.

¹ *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, in *The Thornton Romances*, pp. 121-176, vv. 1000-1004.

² *The Taill of Rauf Coil3ear*, ed. Herrtage, *EETS*, xxxix (1882), vv. 755-756.

³ *The Siege of Melayne*, ed. cit., vv. 1408-1416.

⁴ *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. Paul Meyer, Société de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1891-1901), vv. 819 ff.

⁵ Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera Omnia*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series (1879-80), II, 237.

It is plain, then, that the hall or court rituals in the romances are paralleled by historical usage. In fact, the hall was undoubtedly the normal scene for at least the earlier ceremonies.

ii. The battlefield ceremony

Romance data: The battlefield dubbing is especially well represented in *Le Bone Florence of Rome*. Sultan Garcy, while on the field, creates sixty knights, who thereupon try to prove themselves worthy of their spurs:

Then syr Garcy, with mekyll pryde,
Made knyghtys on hys owne syde,
Syxty yonge and feyre,
The warste of ther faders were barons,
That oghte bothe towres and townes,
And all were they ryght heyre.
When Emere and hys men with them mett
At the furste wynnyng of ther schone,
So tye of lyvys were they done,
That all deryd not a pere.¹

Two battlefield knightings are also alluded to in passing in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.² Again, one notes that, in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Lancelot confers knighthood on Beaumains in an impromptu out-door ceremony attended by none of the honorable perquisites of the court dubbing.³ The absence in these passages of any details as to the ceremonial usages suggests that the romance writers visualized a hasty and simplified form of the court ritual. It should also be observed that only unimportant figures in romance stories are dubbed on the field of eattle; the heroes, with very few exceptions, receive knighthood in a magnificent pre-arranged ceremony.

Historical data: It is reasonable to believe that, from earliest feudal times, a simplified form of the court dubbing was used for the creation of knights on the field of war. The feverish atmosphere of a battle, either impending or actually in progress, and the desire of leaders to inspire their men to deeds of valor would make these moments especially propitious for conferring knighthood. Although no accounts of very early historical knightings of this type have been found, a particularly good example occurs in *Le Prince Noir*, a chronicle by Chandos:

Et trestout est li host venue.
Alarme y oist-hom crier.
Li Prince fist ses gentz rengier
Et ses batailles ordeignier.
Là se pooit-hom regarder
Ce que rien ne covient de dire;
Car home y pooit voir reluire
Or fyn et asure et argent

¹ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 644-653.

² *Ed. George G. Perry, EETS*, VIII (1871), vv. 621-624, and 1738-1740.

³ *Ed. cit.*, I, 128.

Et goules et sable ensemment,
 Synnoble et purpre et hermyne.
 Là eut mainte baniere fyne
 De soie et de sendal auxi;
 Car puis le temps que je vous dy,
 Si très-noble chose à véoir
 Ne fut, à recorder le voir.
 Là fut l'avant-garde ordeignée
 Très-noblement à cel journée.
 Là véist-hom chivalers faire
 De esquiers de noble affaire.
 Le roy daun Petre chivaler
 Fist le Prince trestut primer.
 Et Thomas de Holand après,
 Qui de faire armes estoit près,
 Et puis Huon de Courtenay,
 Philippe et Peron que bien say,
 Johan Trivet, Nicolas Bonde;
 Et li ducs, où toutz bien abonde,
 Fist chivaler Raoul Cammois,
 Qui fut beux en faitz et curtois
 Et Gautier Ursewik auxi.¹

According to Chandos' report, the Black Prince, after drawing up his host in battle-array before Vitoria in Spain, created a number of knights among whom was Pedro the Cruel. The Duke of Lancaster also knighted twelve important men on this occasion. The ceremony was rendered colorful by the brilliant armorial standards and took place, apparently, in full view of the army. More details of this mid-fourteenth century battlefield knighting are not given, but one judges that, under the circumstances, the ceremony was brief.

Other instances of the creation of knights just prior to battle occur in *Le Prince Noir*,² and still more are to be found in Froissart's *Chroniques*. The latter chronicler describes the Earl of Buckingham as knighting a group of squires just before besieging the strong castle of Folant. The new knights began a spirited attack and ultimately captured the garrison.³ Again, Froissart recounts how the King of Portugal, having dubbed sixty men at Aljubarota, sent them to the front of their battalion so that their spurs might become them.⁴

The passages just cited indicate that the custom of creating knights on the battlefield was rather often used during the fourteenth century at least. Neither the romances nor the chronicles specify the exact procedure that was followed on these occasions, but one may be justified in assuming that it consisted mainly of the basic acts of the court dubbing — investment with the sword, and the neck-blow. Froissart's accounts of the desperate valor of newly created knights agree well with the description in *Le Bone Florence of Rome* of sixty knights who, having

¹ Ed. Francisque Michel (London and Paris, 1883), vv. 2584–2613.

² *Ibid.*, vv. 145–153, 498–501, 3221–3232, 3247–3248, and 3954–3955.

³ Ed. Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove (Bruxelles, 1867–77), ix, 245–247.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xi, 167–189.

been dubbed by Sultan Garcy, rush headlong on the enemy; but, in other respects, the romance composers do not follow what seems to have been actual usage. That is, battlefield knightings, according to Chandos and Froissart, were of much more frequent occurrence than one would gather from the relatively few references in the romances. Again, in actual life men of noble rank, like King Pedro, not infrequently received knighthood on the battlefield,¹ whereas the heroes of romance are almost invariably dubbed in the more elaborate court or religious ceremony. Perhaps the desire of romance composers to inflate the importance and fame of their heroes and to heighten the coloring of their narratives led them to choose the more spectacular rituals.

iii. The church knighting

Romance data: A number of romance ceremonies clearly take place in a church or chapel. Thus, in *Lovelich's Merlin*:

Thike Same day comandid Arthewr þe kyng
To Gaweyn and to his Felawes so 3yng
To the hed chirche of the cyte to gon.²

There follows a rather elaborate account of the various steps of the ritual. A church as the place of a dubbing is more frequently indicated, however, by references to a religious functionary or a specifically religious act. Thus, in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the knighting of Arthur is described as follows: 'And therewith they knelyd at ones, both ryche and poure / and cryed Arthur mercy by cause they had delayed hym so longe / and Arthur foryaf hem / and took the swerd bitwene both his handes / and offred it upon the aulter where the Archebisshop was / and so was he made knyghte of the best man that was there.'³ In *Lovelich's Merlin*, Arthur's investiture, just as in Malory, takes place in the presence of an archbishop.⁴ Again in Malory, the dubbing of Alixaunder and twenty companions is performed 'at the offering of the mass.'⁵ Similarly, the knighting of Uryan and others, in the prose romance *Melusine*, occurring directly after 'the messe & the seruyse deuyne,' seems to take place in a chapel.⁶ Finally, the knighting of young Guy of Wallingford, in the Cambridge MS. of *Guy of Warwick*, is held before an altar:

The knyghtys, þat were hende,
Knelyd to the awters ende.⁷

¹ There is an incident in Froissart which suggests that squires of the fourteenth century sometimes preferred to receive knighthood in an elaborate ceremony rather than on the battlefield: Jehan de Helennes, a squire of Picardy, cared tenderly for his wounded prisoner of war, Lord de Berkeley, to insure collecting the six thousand nobles of ransom that would enable him to be knighted in an honorable fashion. *Ibid.*, v, 430-432.

² Ed. Ernest Kock, *EETSES*, xciii, cxii, and o.s. clxxxv (1904, 1913, 1932), vv. 25741-25743.

³ *Ed. cit.*, i, 43. ⁴ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 7695-7698.

⁵ *Ed. cit.*, i, 468. ⁶ *Ed. cit.*, p. 152.

⁷ Ed. Julius Zupitza, *EETSES*, xxv, xxvi (1875, 1876), vv. 409-410.

Undoubtedly, this *adoubement* in *Guy of Warwick* is accorded the most satisfactory treatment of any of the ceremonies in the Middle English romances. For this reason, the description is quoted in full in Appendix A. The special religious observances which characterize the church knighting are to be discussed presently.

Historical data: That historical ceremonies were held in chapels and churches is attested by a large amount of evidence some of which has already been cited. For example, the references of John of Salisbury and Peter de Blois to placing the sword on the altar as one of the ceremonial acts clearly identify the scene of the dubbing. Later evidence to the same effect is to be found in Froissart. Among the best of this chronicler's descriptions is that of the dubbing of forty-six squires on the day before the coronation of Henry IV: 'Et a l'endemain le duc du Lancastre les fist chevaliers a sa messe.'¹ One gathers that this knighting of 1399 occurred in connection with the mass. Among later accounts, of which the most complete is the description of the royal ceremony of 1661, certain preliminary steps are described as having taken place in a chapel, but the final act of conferring knighthood was held in the court.²

Beyond all question, then, the writers of romance were merely following received custom in sometimes — as in *Lovelich's Merlin*, *Morte Darthur*, *Melusine*, and *Guy of Warwick* — describing church dubbings.

In addition to the scene of the *adoubements* in the Middle English romances which, as has been shown, corresponds with the scene of historical knightings, certain other preliminary aspects of the ceremony discussed by Treis in the work already mentioned might have been investigated here, particularly the customary age of the candidate for knighthood, the number of candidates usually presented in one ceremony, and the favored seasons, days, and hours for the dubbing. A detailed consideration of such matters has been omitted, not only because they seem to be of less significance than the ceremonial acts themselves, but also because the Middle English romances are much less explicit in these details than the Old French. Such evidence as may be found in the English romances, however, agrees fairly well with Treis's findings. Thus, the age of the candidates most frequently given in both the Old French and Middle English romances is fifteen.³ With respect to the number of knights created in a single ceremony, the Old French romances are the more extravagant, specifying as many as four or five hundred.⁴ In the Middle English poems, the number of squires included in plural

¹ *Op. cit.*, xvi, 204–205.

² This account is entitled *The Manner of creating the Knights of the antient and honourable Order of the Bath*. In *Harleian Miscellany*, ed. Oldys-Park (London, 1808), I, 542–546. The 'antient and honourable Order of the Bath' is not to be confused with the special order, The Knights of the Bath, founded considerably later. It came to be customary for the term 'Knights of the Bath' to be applied to knights created at coronations and other occasions of state. No doubt, the use of the bath in the ceremony of ordination is responsible for the term. George G. Coulton, 'Knighthood,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed.

³ Treis, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–26. See *Amyas and Amylion*, ed. MacEdward Leach, *EETS*, CCIII (1937), v. 163.

⁴ Treis, *op. cit.*, pp. 32–36.

knightings is not, with few exceptions, above 'fulle foure schore,'¹ a number not much out of keeping with actual usage, since Froissart reports that forty-six men were knighted by the Duke of Lancaster in a court ceremony, and considerably larger groups received their spurs in the wholesale battlefield dubbings. The time of the romance ceremonies, according to Treis, is most often early in the morning of a Sunday in the spring, many times Whitsunday.²

2. CEREMONIAL ACTS OF THE SECULAR KNIGHTING

i. Investment with the sword

Romance data: The act most frequently mentioned in the Middle English romances is investment with the sword. Ordinarily, the poets speak of the sword as being girded on the candidate: "Ser," said Ponthus, "make ye me knyght and yeve me armore, and I shal goo and doo my devir." The kyng maked kym knyght, and girde hym with a sworde.³

þe day by gan to springe
Horn cam bi forþ þe kinge
Wit swerde horn he girde
Rit honder hys herte.⁴

Occasionally, the sword is hung about the candidate's neck, presumably by a baldric or shoulder-belt:

The morwe Afftir thei made him knyzt,
Richely was he dubbed & dyzt.
Ajax Thelamaneus
Off hem was most glorious,
He gyrd his sword aboute his swire.⁵

The hero of *Partenope of Blois* appears for his *adoubement* with his sword suspended from his neck, as was proper for a squire.⁶ When knighting this hero, Melior, the fairy mistress, takes the sword from about his neck and 'A-boute his medle þo it gyrd.'⁷ 'To dub a knight with the sword' is a rather common expression:

¹ *William of Palerne*, ed. W. W. Skeat, *EETS*, I (1867), vv. 1100-1102. In *The Life of Alisaunder*, however, 100 men are dubbed at once (in *Metrical Romances*, ed. Weber, I, 1-326, v. 818), and in *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* Jupiter creates 400 knights (*Ed. cit.*, I, 175-176).

² Treis, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-54. See *Lovelich's Merlin*, ed. cit., vv. 7695 ff.

³ *King Ponthus and Fair Sidone*, ed. F. J. Mather, Jr., *PMLA*, XII (1897), 1-150, Chapter VII, p. 20.

⁴ *King Horn*, ed. cit., Oxford MS., vv. 515-518. See also *Lovelich's Merlin*, ed. cit., v. 12211; *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, ed. Octavia Richardson, *EETS*, XLIV, XLV (1885), p. 31; *The Lyfe of Alisaunder*, ed. cit., v. 814; *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy*, ed. George A. Panton and David Donaldson, *EETS*, XXXIX, LVI (1874), v. 10939; and *Huon of Burdeux*, ed. S. L. Lee, *EETS*, XI, XLI, XLIII, I (1882, 1883, 1884, 1887), p. 635.

⁵ *Laud Troy Book*, ed. J. Ernest Wülfing, *EETS*, CXXI, CXXII (1902), vv. 16581-16585. See also *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. cit., Book IV, vv. 3990-3994.

⁶ Treis (*op. cit.*, pp. 85-86) discusses the differences in the manner in which squires and knights presumably wore their swords.

⁷ Ed. A. Trampe Bödtker, *EETS*, CIX (1912), v. 9046. Melior seems to be the only woman in the English romances who confers knighthood. In *Huon of Burdeux*, however, a woman disguised as a man is dubbed.

Ubbe dubbede him to knith
With a swerd ful swiþe brith.¹

Very similar statements occur in *Beues of Hamtoun*,² *Libeaus Desconus*,³ *King Horn*,⁴ and *Duke Rowlande and Sir Ottuell*.⁵ Exactly what the lord who confers knighthood does with the sword is not made clear in these passages. He might be visualized as fastening it about the squire's waist, in which event *dub* would have its original meaning of 'to arm,'⁶ or the expression might be meant to refer to the accolade, which will be discussed presently.

Historical data: Historical sources throughout the Middle Ages mention investment with the sword as a normal step of the knighting. The earliest chronicle records of the ceremony include references to this act ('militaribus armis accinxit,' and 'cingulo militiae accinctus est'). In a passage from a French chronicle already referred to, young William Marshal is described as standing before the Chamberlain of Tancarville where he is belted with the sword of knighthood: 'Li chamberlens li ceinst l'espee.'⁷ Later allusions to this act are to be found in profusion. As Schultz has stated, 'Die Hauptsache war, dass der junge Mann mit dem Schwerte umgürtet wurde.'⁸ The romances give few details of the process of girding on the sword, but some notion may be gained from a highly interesting miniature appearing in *MS Cotton Nero D 1*.⁹ Here, a candidate clad in a long robe stands while a person, whose importance is indicated by the fact that he wears a crown or coronet, buckles on him a belt to which a sword is attached in such a manner that the scabbard hangs diagonally across the front of the body.

Although full details as to the manner of presenting the sword of knighthood are lacking in the historical sources here examined, it is clear that the romances and chronicles agree in the strong emphasis they place on this act of the ceremony.

ii. Investment with the spurs

Romance data: Less often than investment with the sword, affixing the spurs is represented as part of the ritual in the romances. The most elaborate account of the spurring of the candidate, in this instance a dwarf, occurs in the *Prose Merlin*:

... and whan the kynge hadd eten, and the clothes weren vp, the damesell drough oute of an awmenere a peire of spores of golde that weere woun den in a cloth of silke, and seide to the kynge, 'Sir, delyuer me, for I haue ben here longe.' With that lepte forth kay the

¹ *Havelok*, ed. cit., vv. 2314-2315.

² Ed. Eugen Kölbing, *EETSES*, XLVI, XLVIII, LXV (1885, 1886, 1894), vv. 969-975.

³ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 87-90.

⁴ *Ed. cit.*, Cambridge MS., vv. 499-500.

⁵ Ed. Herrtage, *EETSES*, xxxv (1880), vv. 140-141.

⁶ Ackerman, 'Dub in the Middle English Romances,' cited above.

⁷ *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. cit., v. 821. See the discussion of this knighting by Sidney Painter, *William Marshal, Knight Errant, Baron, and Regent of England* (Baltimore [Md.], 1933), p. 20.

⁸ Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁹ This miniature is reproduced in Schultz, *op. cit.*, opposite p. 185.

stiwarde, and wolde haue sette on his right spore; and the damesell hym sesed by the hande, and seide, 'What is that,' quod she, 'sir knight, that ye purpose to do.' Quod kay, 'I will sette on his right spore, and also make hym knyght with myn owne hande.' 'Of youre hande,' seide the maiden, 'shall it neuer be-falle, yef god will, for noon ther-to shall sette hande saf only the kyng Arthur, ffor he hath me graunted in couenaunt, and I truste that he will me not faile, yef it be his plesier, ffor so myght he me bringe to the deth and me be-traye. Ne noon ne ought to touche so high a persone as is my lief, but he be kyng or worthy prince.' 'So helpe me god,' seide the kyng, 'ye haue right, and I shall do all youre volonte.' Than the kyng toke his right spore of the damesell, and sette it on the right hele, and the damesell sette on the lifte.¹

The tone of this description makes it apparent that affixing the right spur, at least, was an important act to be reserved for a noble of consequence.

In the Cambridge MS. of *Guy of Warwick*, each of the several candidates kneeling before the altar has a pair of gilt spurs hung over his sword-hilts (See Appendix A). In beginning the ceremony, the Earl of Warwick removes the spurs from the sword-hilts and sets them on the candidates' feet. In all likelihood, the candidates stand to be spurred:

At the furste to Gye he come,
Of the swyrde þe spurres he nome.
He set the spurres on hys fote.²

In the dubbings just cited, the spurring of the candidate precedes investment with the sword, and the same sequence is observed in a ceremony in *The Foure Sons of Aymon*,³ and, as Treis shows, in almost all the Old French romances.⁴ In *King Horn* (Cambridge MS.), however, this act follows the bestowal of the sword:

Horn he dubbede to kniȝte
Wiþ swerd & spures briȝte.⁵

The same is true of the dubbing of Telamon in the Troy romances:

Telemon full tyte, tristy of dedis,
Gird hym full graidly with a gay sworde,
Bad hym nait hit nemly, and noy of his fos,
And dere for the dethe of his dere fader.
Two spurres full spedely spent on his helis,
þat were gaily ouer-gilt . . .⁶

Alexander, when knighted by his father, is not spurred until after the accolade, ordinarily the concluding act,⁷ and in the Oxford text of *King Horn*, the hero is set upon his horse before being adorned with the spurs:

¹ Ed. Henry B. Wheatley, *EETS*, x, xxi, xxxvi (1899), p. 637.

² *Ed. cit.*, vv. 413-415.

³ *Ed. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

⁵ *Ed. cit.*, Cambridge MS, vv. 499-500.

⁶ *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 10938-10943. See also the *Laud Troy Book*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 16591-16593; and *Lydgate's Troy Book*, *ed. cit.*, Book iv, vv. 4003-4006.

⁷ *Lyfe of Alisaunder*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 816-817.

He sette him on stede
 Red so any glede
 And sette on his fotes
 Boþe spores and botes.¹

Historical data: The chroniclers do not emphasize the presentation of the ceremonial gilt spurs as they do investment with the sword. Nevertheless, there are reasons for believing that this act was sometimes a part of historical knightings. Not only do spurs, usually described as golden or gilt, become the symbol of knighthood, but the manuals of chivalry place great stress on the allegorical value of this piece of equipment and on the act of bestowing it on the candidate.² More satisfactory evidence, however, is to be found in the manuscript illustration to which reference has already been made. While the candidate is being girded with the sword, another man kneeling at his feet is plainly pictured as buckling on a pair of spurs. Moreover, in a document recounting the *adoubement* that accompanied the coronation of Charles II in 1661, the spurring of the candidate is fully outlined. Here, the spurs are described as being hung 'at the Handle of the Sword,'³ just as in *Guy of Warwick*.

The evidence here presented suggests that affixing the spurs was probably not an essential element of the knighting. It must often have been omitted in the hasty battlefield dubbings and possibly from all but the more ceremonious court rituals as well.

iii. The accolade

Romance data: The act which is sometimes represented in the romances as the culmination of the ceremony is the neck-blow or *colée* delivered by the officiating lord either, as Sir Gilbert Hay observes in *The Buke of Knychthede*, 'with his hand, or with a drawin suerd, in the nek.'⁴ In Middle English, as suggested in the paper already referred to,⁵ this act is often denoted by the word *dub*.

The passages describing a blow with the hand are not so clear or so numerous as those describing the sword-tap, yet such expressions as the following are occasionally to be found:

Kyng Arthour in Maydene-lande
 Dubbid hym knyghte with his hande.⁶

To armes þe king lete crie
 þe folk of al his land
 To help tristrem: for þi
 He made kniȝt wiþ his hand.⁷

¹ *Ed. cit.*, Oxford MS, vv. 519–522. Inasmuch as this is the only romance in which the squire mounts his horse to be spurred, one suspects that an error has crept into the text, probably through the transposition of vv. 521–522.

² *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, *ed. cit.*, p. 79.

³ *The Manner of Creating Knights of the Bath*, *ed. cit.*, pp. 544–545.

⁴ Ed. J. H. Stevenson, *Scottish Text Society*, LXII (1914), p. 43.

⁵ Ackerman, *op. cit.*

⁶ *Sir Perceval of Galles*, in *The Thornton Romances*, pp. 1–87, vv. 1645–1646.

⁷ *Sir Tristrem*, ed. George P. McNeil, *STC*, VIII (1886), vv. 782–785.

The interpretation of the above passages just suggested could possibly be objected to on the grounds that the phrase 'to be dubbed with the hand' might only be a way of saying 'to be made a knight at the hands of' or 'under the auspices of.' Yet there are other romance accounts in which the hand-blow is more plainly described. *Lovelich's Merlin*, for example, contains an admirable picture of the knighting, by Arthur and Merlin, of Gawain, his three brothers, and a number of other youths. The actions of the king and his assistants in this ordination are given in some detail, and they are duplicated in the dubbing of each of the squires. First, the sword is belted about the candidate's waist; second, the spurs are fastened on his heels, the king himself buckling on the right spur; and third, the king smites the candidate on the neck. The last act is indicated thus in the knighting of Gawain:

Ryht jn the Nekke thanne dubbed hym he,
And bad hym a worthy knyht to be.¹

Sagramore's accolade, occurring a few lines later, is similarly described: 'Sethen jn the Nekke kyng Arthour him smot.'² In this plural *adoubement* there is no suggestion that Arthur has a sword in his hand when he delivers the neck-blows. The only swords referred to are those belted about the candidates' waists. The supposition is, then, that the accolade is delivered with the hand. Besides *Lovelich's Merlin*, other romances, like *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*,³ offer examples of knightings in which the accolade seems to consist of a hand or fist-blow, since the sword has already been disposed of.

The sword-tap appears to be described in passages such as this:

Nyne monethes es gone arighte
Sen I with Cursu was dobbide knyghte,
My golde brayden brande.⁴

To be sure, *dub* might conceivably refer here, not to the accolade with the sword-blade, but to belting the sword Cursu about the candidate's waist. In other romances, however, the sword-tap is more distinctly portrayed:

Thenne had the kynge gret joye, and dressyng hym to sytte vp, and toke the swerde by the pomel that Uryan toke hym, and therwith dowbed hym knyht.⁵

. . . the damoyseil gyrtte aboute hym his sworde/ then the kynge drewe it out of the shethe and therwith made hym knyht.⁶

Although the accolade is not specifically mentioned in either of these accounts, it is likely that, since the lord conferring the honor is holding a sword by the pommel, the act indicated by 'dowbed' and 'made hym knyht' is the sword-tap.

There is no accolade in the Middle English romances consisting of both the hand-blow and the sword-tap — the sort of double accolade which Don Quixote

¹ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 25761–25762.

² *Ibid.*, v. 25789.

³ *Ed. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴ *Duke Rowlande and Sir Ottuell of Spayne*, ed. cit., vv. 139–141.

⁵ *Melusine*, ed. cit., p. 153.

⁶ *Huon of Burdeux*, ed. cit., p. 635.

received from the learned inn-keeper.¹ In fact, it seems impossible in most of the romance references to determine whether a fist-blow or sword-tap is meant. In *Huon of Burdeux*, Ide, who is disguised as a man, receives 'the necke stroke of knyghthood' from the emperor.² King Philip, when knighting Alexander, gives him 'the tole aryght',³ and Prince Horn is another hero who, having been girt with the sword and supplied with spurs, is 'smot a litel wigt' by his suzerain.⁴ There is no suggestion in the Middle English romances that the blow was an especially severe one.

Historical data: According to the historians of chivalry, the accolade, an act of almost hopelessly obscure origin, became a part of the knighting ceremony as early as the eleventh century.⁵ But in its early form, the neck-blow was delivered with the hand or fist, not with the sword. Moreover, in Treis's opinion, 'der Schlag war ein ziemlich stärker'.⁶

Later — sometime in the twelfth century, according to Léon Gautier — the sword-tap came to be substituted for the blow with the hand.⁷ And, in the brief ceremony of modern times, the act of girding on the sword, once 'die Hauptsache,' has vanished entirely, leaving the sword-tap as the principal step. That both the fist-blow and sword-tap were known, and that they were used more or less interchangeably in mediaeval Britain seems to be proved by Sir Gilbert Hay's addition already mentioned to the translation of Lull's *Order of Chivalry*:

And than suld the squier hald up his handis to heuyn, and his eyne to the hicht, and his hert to God, syttand on his kneis, and thare suld the prince have the suerd redy of honour, gylt with gold, and belt it about his sydis, in takenyng of chastitee, justice, and cheritee, and thare the knyght suld outhir geve him a strake with his hand, or with a drawin suerd, in the nek, to think on the poyntis and defend his dewiteis.⁸

¹ See *Don Quixote*, Chapter III. In his translation of this work Henry Watts comments at length on the romances and 'chivalry books' used by Cervantes. No particular information is given on the curious accolade, however. *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (London, 1888), vol. 1, Appendix D, pp. 291–308.

² *Huon of Burdeux*, ed. cit., p. 712.

³ *Lyfe of Alisaunder*, ed. cit., v. 815.

⁴ *King Horn*, ed. cit., Cambridge MS., v. 503., Harleian MS., v. 507, Oxford MS., v. 523. Horn is seated on his horse while his spurs are fastened on, then the fist-blow is delivered.

⁵ It would seem that the neck-blow was not originally a part of the Germanic maturity rite. (See Köhler, *op. cit.*, III, 66.) It is described as part of the ritual of knighting in twelfth century *chansons de geste*, however, and later developed into the culminating act of the ceremony. (Taylor, *op. cit.*, I, 543). According to one theory, the neck-blow developed from an ancient Roman custom of striking a slave upon freeing him. This blow was called the *alapa*, and Du Cange reports the use of both the blow and the word *alapa* by mediaeval writers dealing with military affairs: 'Alapa militaris, dicitur Scriptoribus Latinis medii aevii, Ictus, qui tyronis ad militarem dignitatem promovendi collo aut humeris, ense vel gladio, quo miles fiebat, infligebatur. Mos, ni fallor, derivatus a manumissionibus quos manumittebant, eos alapa circumagebant.' *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, ed. G. A. L. Henschel (Paris, 1840–50), s. v. *alapa*. It is probably best to emphasize Du Cange's 'ni fallor' and admit that the origin of the accolade is conjectural.

⁶ 'Es wird bald angegeben, dass der Schlag mit der Hand, und zwar der rechten, geführt wird, bald unterbleibt dies. Vom Schwerte hierbei garnicht die Rede.' *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁷ Gautier, *op. cit.*, pp. 282–283.

⁸ *Ed. cit.*, p. 43.

An historical example of what may well have been a fist-blow is to be found in the knighting of William Marshal in 1167, already referred to:

Li chamberlens li ceinst l'espee
Dunc puis dona meint cole.e.¹

That the *colée* was at least an optional part of a full *adoubement* seems indisputable. To attempt to assign a date to the earliest use of this ceremonial act, or to determine when the sword-tap supplanted the fist-blow lies beyond the scope of this study. It suffices here to have established that both types of accolade were known and used in Britain during the period of the romances.

iv. The formula

Romance data: In the romances, the lord who confers knighthood is often described as uttering a rather formalized statement at the conclusion of the ceremony. Thus, King Houlac, when giving Prince Horn the neck-blow: 'bed him beon a god kniȝt.'² The same formula is used by King Philip in the knighting of Alexander,³ and by the Earl of Warwick in the *adoubement* of Guy and his companions.⁴ When dubbing the sons of Aymon, Charlemagne says, 'God encrease in the goodnes, honoure, and worthynes,'⁵ and similar pious sentiments are to be found in the *Prose Merlin*⁶ and *Lovelich's Merlin*.⁷ Sometimes much more elaborate pronouncements are voiced, as in *Huon of Burdeux*: 'yde, remembre this order, the whiche ye haue receyued this daye/ and I praye to god it maybe to the encreas of your honour, and euer beware that your thoughtes be not lyght or vauerynge, but be sage and dyscrete, and atemperate, and be hardy in baytell.'⁸

Historical data: Neither the chief manuals of chivalry nor the chronicles refer directly to a concluding speech on the part of the lord conferring knighthood.⁹ Nevertheless, there seems to be sufficient reason for believing that the formula was used in historical *adoubements*. In the first place, it is natural that the officiating lord should declare the candidate to be a knight at the end of the ritual. In the greatly simplified ceremony of the present day, in fact, a brief formula is employed.¹⁰ Second, a formula is stated to have been used in the elaborate ordination that accompanied the coronation of Charles II: 'And the

¹ *Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. cit., vv. 821-822.

² *King Horn*, ed. cit., Cambridge MS., v. 504. See also the other texts of *King Horn*.

³ *Lyfe of Alisaunder*, ed. cit., v. 816.

⁴ Cambridge MS., ed. cit., v. 420.

⁵ *Four Sons of Aymon*, ed. cit., p. 31.

⁶ *Ed. cit.*, p. 638.

⁷ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 25761-25764.

⁸ *Ed. cit.*, p. 712.

⁹ In *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, the squire is presented with a palm at the close of the ceremony. No formal speech is indicated. *Ed. cit.*, p. 74.

¹⁰ 'In our days when a knight is personally made he kneels before the sovereign, who lays a sword drawn, ordinarily the sword of State, on either of his shoulders and says "Rise," calling him by his Christian name with the addition of "Sir" before it,' George G. Coulton, 'Knighthood,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., XIII, 432.

King, putting his own Arms about the Esquire's Neck, shall say, *Be thou a good Knight*.¹ In all probability, the formulas in actual use varied as widely in length and wording as those in the romances discussed above.

v. The concluding feast and celebration

Romance data: The celebration often mentioned as following the knighting seems usually to consist of a banquet and music, and sometimes of a tournament as well. A good description of the merry making is to be found in the *Laud Troy Book*:

Then myzt men here a mechel dyn
Off Trompes, pipes, & other glues
Among the Gregais & the Grues.
Gret was the murthe & the melody
That ther was of Menstralcy;
The Grues held gret feste & strong
Many dayes aftir and long,
And made gret Ioye and solace
In worschepe of him that newe knyzt was.²

Jousts are included in the celebration that follows a knighting in *The Lyfe of Ipomydon*:

The Kyng his sonne knyght gan make
And many another for his sake.
Justes were cryed; ladyes for to see
Thedyr come lordys grete plente
Turnementis atyred in the felde,
A M. armed with spere and shelde
Knyghtis bygan to-gedir to ryde;
Somme were vnhorsyd on euery syde.³

In *Lovelich's Merlin*, the military games are omitted following the knighting of Gawain and his companions because of impending warfare.⁴ Sometimes, as in *Octovian*, a 'dubbyng feste' is combined with a wedding celebration and lasts as long as seven days.⁵

Historical data: Schultz, Treis, Gautier, and other writers speak of a banquet and military games, such as the *behourd*, the *quintain*, and various kinds of tournaments, as the normal conclusion of the more elaborate *adoubements*.⁶ The manuals of chivalry likewise specify an honorable feast at which *largesse* is to

¹ *Ed. cit.*, p. 545.

² *Ed. cit.*, vv. 16594-16602. See also *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 10946-10949; and *Lyfe of Alisaunder*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 820-823.

³ In *Metrical Romances*, *ed. Weber*, II, 279-365, vv. 531-538. See also *Ipomydon*, *ed. cit.*, vv. 973-978; *Horn Childe in King Horn*, *ed. cit.*, pp. 179-192, vv. 427-429; *Four Sonnes of Aymon*, *ed. cit.*, p. 31; *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, *ed. cit.*, pp. 313-314; and *Helyas, The Knight of the Swan*, in *Early English Prose Romances*, *ed. William J. Thoms* (London, 1889), pp. 782-783.

⁴ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 25811 ff.

⁵ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 1273-1274. See also *Melusine*, *ed. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

⁶ Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 190, and Treis, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-113.

be distributed.¹ In addition, references to a dubbing feast appear in Froissart's description of the dubbing of forty-six squires by the Duke of Lancaster in 1399,² and also in the account of the knightings which took place in conjunction with the coronation of Charles II.³ Only the knighting of a nobleman of very great consideration, in all likelihood, called for a tournament. In these tournaments, the new knights were, of course, expected to display their skill and strength. A full discussion of this final phase of the dubbing celebration should be reserved, however, for a special treatment of the tournament.

In depicting the dubbing feast and the tournament in which new made knights perform spectacularly, the romance writers were undoubtedly following the practice of the greatest nobles of their day.

vi. Other phases of the secular knighting

Other aspects of the secular ritual which are not discussed here in detail are the arming of the candidate in hauberk, helm, and other military equipment, and the distribution of dubbing gifts. In his study of the Old French romances, Treis finds ample illustrations of the arming of the squires with leg-protectors, hauberk, helm, shield, and lance, as part of the ceremony,⁴ and, in the manuals of chivalry, these pieces of equipment, although not said to be ceremoniously presented to the candidate, are carefully discussed from the standpoint of their religious symbolism.⁵ In the *Prose Merlin* Arthur dresses the dwarf in a hauberk before girding on the sword,⁶ but, in general, the Middle English romances do not include any account of the equipping of the candidate in various pieces of armor. Ordinarily, when the heroes of the Middle English romances appear in their lords' hall to receive knighthood, they are clad either in 'riche atyr,'⁷ or, less often, in full armor.⁸

Not strictly a part of the knighting ritual, dubbing gifts in both the Middle English and Old French romances often take the form of armor, a sword, or a

¹ *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. cit., pp. 75-76.

² *Ed. cit.*, xvi, 204-205.

³ 'After this, the Knights must conduct him again into the Hall, where he shall sit the first at the Knights Table, and the Knights about him, himself to be served as the other Knights are; but he must neither eat nor drink at the Table, nor spit, nor look about him, upwards or downwards, more than a Bride.' *The Manner of Creating Knights of the Bath*, ed. cit., p. 545.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 73-80.

⁵ In *L'Ordene de chevalerie*, Hue de Tabarie dresses Saladin in a white (chain-mail?) coif, which, he says, signifies that the soul is to be kept free from sin. *Ed. cit.*, vv. 220-234. An entire section of *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* consists of an account of the 'sygnefyaunce of the armes of a knyght.' Here, the sword is said to signify war on the enemies of the Cross, the edges of the sword chivalry and justice, the spear truth, the helm dread of shame, the hauberk defence against vice, and so on, even to the various pieces of harness and armor on the knight's destrier. One wonders whether this tendency to discuss the symbolism of the knight's armor and weapons could have any connection with the famous passage in Ephesians, 6: 13-17.

⁶ *Ed. cit.*, p. 637.

⁷ *The Seege of Troye*, ed. cit., v. 1311.

⁸ *Partenope of Blois*, ed. cit., vv. 8954-8957.

horse,¹ but sometimes the suzerain supplies the new knight with everything he requires, as in *Amys and Amylion*:

He dubbed boþe þo bernes bold
To knigtes in þat tide,
& fond hem al þat hem was nede,
Hors & wepen & worþly wede
As princes prout in pride.²

A fief is another type of dubbing gift. King Arthur makes the Carl lord of Carlyle upon knighting him,³ Sir Eglamoure gives lands to the poorest among thirty-five new knights,⁴ and the earl who dubs Degare wishes to seize into his hand 'rents, treasure, & half of his land.'⁵ The gift of high office is represented in *William of Palerne*. Here, the hero is made warden by the Emperor of Rome.⁶ In *Horn Childe*, certain newly dubbed knights are made bailiffs.⁷ The extravagant gifts showered upon romance heroes are, very probably, exaggerations in keeping with the romance composers' and minstrels' professional interest in *largesse*, although more modest dubbing presents may well have been the custom.

The foregoing discussion of the secular *adoubement* reveals that the principal ritualistic acts, according to the romance writers, are girding on the sword, investment with spurs, the accolade either with hand or sword, the formula, and the concluding celebration. The historical parallels, although more satisfactory for certain of these steps than for others, indicate that the poets were, in general, following actual practice in portraying the *adoubements* of their heroes.

3. SPECIAL RELIGIOUS ACTS

i. The vigil

Romance data: That the development of the Christian concept of chivalry entailed a change in the ceremony of knighting has already been explained. For example, the religious dubbing was normally held in a church or chapel, as is indicated in the discussion of the scene of the knighting. Other changes were in the form of additions to the secular ritual of which the vigil before the altar is probably the most important. An excellent account of the vigil occurs in the Cambridge MS. of *Guy of Warwick*:

Forthe then yede hym Gye
And chase to hym squyers twenty.
Into a chambur þe be goon,
There þey schulde be dubbed ychone.

¹ *Reinbrun Gij sone of Warwike*, in *Guy of Warwick*, Auchinleck MS, ed. Julius Zupitza, *EETS*, XLII, XLIX, LIX (1883, 1887, 1891), pp. 631-674, stanza 64, v. 8; *William of Palerne*, ed. cit., v. 1103; *Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. cit., vv. 971-974; *Libeaus Desconus*, ed. cit., vv. 90-93; and *The Seege of Troye*, ed. cit., vv. 1308-1309. ² Ed. cit., vv. 164-168.

³ *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle* in *Syr Gawayne*, ed. Sir Frederick Madden (London, 1839), pp. 256-274, vv. 629-630.

⁴ *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, ed. cit., vv. 1006-1008.

⁵ *Sir Degare* in *The Percy Folio Manuscript*, III, 16-48, v. 329.

⁶ Ed. cit., v. 1104. ⁷ Ed. cit., vv. 101-105.

Kyrtyls they had oon of sylke
 Also whyte, as any mylke.
 Of gode sylke and of purpull palle
 Mantels above they caste alle.
 Hosys þey had vppon, but no schone;
 Barefote they were euerychone.
 But garlondys þey had of precyous stones
 And perlys ryche for the noones.
 When þey were þus ycledded,
 To a chambur the Erle hym yede.
 A squyer broght newe brondys:
 They toke þe poyntys in þer hondys.
 They hangyd on euery swyrde hylte
 A peyre of sporys newe gylte.
 Before þe awter þey knelyd ychone,
 Vnto mydnyght were all goone.¹

The only other clear indication of a vigil in the Middle English romances seems to be in the description, already quoted in another connection, of the dubbing of Gawain and his followers in *Lovelich's Merlin*:

Thike Same day comandid Arthewr þe kyng
 To Gaweyn and to his Felawes so ȝing
 To the hed chirche of the cyte to gon,
 they ther that nyht to waken echon
 Tyl vppon the Morwen to-forn the Masse;
 there woken they alle, boþe more & lasse.
 and, as Reherseth this Storye,
 atte qwynȝyme of pentecost hit wes, trewelye.
 But Nethyr kyng Boors ne kyng Ban
 Neþer þe xlj knyhtes of þe Rownde table than
 Ne leften neuere felischepe of þese bachelers ȝyng,
 Tyl vppon þe morwen the day gan spryng.²

In the first of the above passages, the vigil is held, apparently, in a chapel in the Earl of Warwick's castle; in the second, the scene is 'the hed chirche of the cyte' — probably the cathedral. Guy and his companions appear to have spent the entire night kneeling before the altar. We are not told so much about the other group of squires, although it is plain that King Bors and King Ban watched with the candidates. The vigil is terminated in *Lovelich's Merlin* by the celebration of 'hy Masse'; in *Guy of Warwick* there is no mention of the mass.

Historical data: The historians of chivalry speak of the vigil as a well-established part of religious ceremonies and suggest that it may be a development of an early catechumenal custom.³ The vigil was used in the dubbing of Geoffrey Plantagenet in 1129 by Henry 1 of England,⁴ and Froissart speaks of it in connection with a dubbing of 1399: 'Le samedi devant le jour de son couronnement,

¹ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 385-404.

² *Ed. cit.*, vv. 25741-25752.

³ Taylor, *op. cit.*, I, 544.

⁴ Quoted in Meller, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

le duc de Lancastre se departy de Wesmoustier et s'en ala au chastel de Londres atout grans gens, et celle nuit veillierent tous les escuiers qui devoient estre fais chevalliers a l'endemain.¹ Here, the celebration of the mass is said to have followed the vigil as in *Lovelich's Merlin*. In the late *Manner of creating the Knights of the . . . Bath*, already mentioned, is to be found a description of the night watch of a number of candidates whose *adoubements* rendered the coronation of Charles II more festive.²

One gathers from the historical references that the vigil was more often employed in actual knightings than the rare allusions in the Middle English romances would lead him to suppose. In the Old French romances, *die Nachtwache* was of frequent occurrence, according to Treis.³ Also, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* emphasizes the significance of this act,⁴ although it is not so much as mentioned in *L'Ordene de chevalerie*. Possibly, then, the vigil should be regarded as an important, but not indispensable, step in the religious ceremony.

ii. Dedication of the sword

Romance data: A second religious act, the significance of which is self-evident, is the placing of the sword on the altar for the blessing of the priest. In the Middle English romances there are only two clear accounts of this act. In Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the dubbing of Arthur is described as follows: ' . . . and Arthur foryaf him/ and took the swerd bitwene both his handes/ and offred it upon the aulter where the Archebisshop was/ and so he was made knyghte of the best man that was there.'⁵ Again, in *Sir Tristrem*, this passage occurs:

His swerd he offred þan
and to þe auter it bare.⁶

In both romances, this act occurs before the actual dubbing. Although the blessing itself is not specified, placing the sword on the altar could scarcely have any other purpose.

Historical data: There can be no doubt that the dedication of the sword or other weapons on the altar was commonly a part of actual knightings. Not only do historians of chivalry regard the act as genuine,⁷ but two mediaeval writers

¹ *Op. cit.*, xvi, 204-205.

² 'Then shall the Esquire's Governors shut the Door of the Chapel, none staying therein except themselves, the Priest, the Chandler, and the Watch. And in this Manner shall the Esquire stay in the Chapel all Night, till it be Day, bestowing himself in Orisons and Prayers, beseeching Almighty God, and his blessed Mother, that of their Good Grace they will give him Ability to receive this high temporal Dignity, to the Honour, Praise, and Service of them; as also of the holy Church, and the Order of Knighthood. And at Daybreak, one shall call the Priest to confess him of all his Sins, and, having heard Mattins and Mass, shall afterwards be commended, if he please,' *Ed. cit.*, p. 543.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 58-65.

⁴ 'Thesquyer ouȝt to faste the vygylle of the same feste in thonour of the saint/ of whom the fest is made that day/ & he ouȝt to go to the chirche for to pray god. & ouȝt to wake the nyȝt & be in his prayers/,' *Ed. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

⁵ *Ed. cit.*, I, 43.

⁶ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 1101-1102.

⁷ Treis, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

already referred to mention it with unmistakable clearness. Peter de Blois' comment to the effect that new knights receive their swords from the altar by way of signifying that they are sons of the Church has already been quoted. John of Salisbury's statement is more satisfactory since he specifically calls the dedication of the sword a received custom: 'Unde jam inolevit consuetudo solemnitis, ut ea ipsa die qua quisque militari cingulo decoratur, ecclesiam solemniter adeat, gladioque super altare posito et oblato. . . .'¹ Another and later allusion to this act appears in *The Manner of creating the Knights of the . . . Bath*: 'And then he shall ungird himself of his Sword, and, with great Devotion to God and holy Church, offer it there [on the altar]; praying unto God and all his Saints, that he may keep that Order which he hath so taken, even to the End.'² It would seem from this description that the consecration of the sword followed the knighting proper.

Obviously, then, the two allusions in the Middle English romances to placing the sword on the altar are paralleled in actual usage.

iii. Other phases of the religious ceremony

Two phases of the religious knighting that are not well represented in the Middle English romances are the ceremonial costume of the candidate, and the ritualistic bath. The clothing of the heroes in the Middle English poems is not carefully described, although in *Guy of Warwick* they don white silk kirtles, mantles of purple, and jewelled garlands.³ Costumes of this elaborate sort are rather often portrayed in the French romances in connection with religious rituals. Nowhere in the romances, however, is the squire's clothing said to have symbolic significance, as in the manuals of chivalry. Here, particularly in *L'Ordene de chevalerie*, the religious symbolism of each article of apparel is discussed as the candidate is being clothed by his mentor.⁴

It is odd that the ritualistic bath should have been overlooked in the Middle English romances that survive, for this act assumes some importance in the Old French romances.⁵ Moreover, that the bath was part of actual *adoubements* held in England is fully substantiated.⁶ It was employed in the knighting of Geoffrey Plantagenet in 1129,⁷ and Froissart more than once mentions this step in connection with ceremonies that took place in London in the middle fourteenth century. Also, the manuals of chivalry assign to the bath, which, like the vigil, is thought to be a survival of a catechumenal custom, considerable symbolic value.⁸

¹ *Polycraticus*, ed. cit., lib. vi, cap. 6, col. 602.

² *Ed. cit.*, p. 545.

³ Cambridge MS., ed. cit., vv. 389-396.

⁴ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 137-186.

⁵ Treis, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-58.

⁶ The best discussion of the ritualistic bath is to be found in the preface to Roy Temple House's edition of *L'Ordene de chevalerie*, pp. 15-16. See also Taylor, *op. cit.*, I, 544-545.

⁷ Quoted in Meller, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁸ The purificatory function of the bath is emphasized:

One other ceremonial act, appearing in a single English romance, *King Ponthus and the Fair Sidone*, is a kiss which here seems to take the place of the accolade.¹ The kiss was probably actual usage since it is mentioned both in *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*² and *The Manner of creating Knights of the . . . Bath*,³ although it must have been of infrequent occurrence.

One is tempted to extend a discussion of the creation of a knight to a consideration of how he carried into practice the ideals symbolized in his ordination ritual. Such a discussion involves factors only remotely connected with the ceremonial, however, and thus goes far beyond the scope of the present paper.

III

It is now possible to suggest the relationship that exists between the Middle English romances and one important phase of the times they represent.

Historical knightings, as has been shown, were of two general types: secular and religious. The secular ceremony took place either in the hall, or on the battlefield; the religious in a church or chapel. Up to the thirteenth century, perhaps, the secular ceremony was predominant, but thereafter the religious ritual seems to have come into frequent use. Three of the dubbings alluded to in the Middle English romances take place on the battlefield; five, so far as can be determined, in a church or chapel; and it must be assumed that the large remainder, in the absence in most cases of specific indications as to the setting, are meant to be court knightings. Thus, the secular, both in the court and on the battlefield, and the religious ceremonies are to be found in the romances. On the other hand, battlefield knightings are of far less frequent occurrence in the romances than the chronicles would lead one to expect. Further, virtually all the romance heroes are dubbed, not in the mass battlefield knightings, as were a number of important historical personages, but in the more elaborate and stately court ceremonies. Possibly, as has been suggested, the romance writers departed somewhat from actual usage in this respect in their effort to stress the importance of their heroes.

Puis le fait en un baing entrer,
 Lors li comenche a demander
 Li rois que cis bains senefie.
 Hues respont de Tabarie
 'Sire, cis baing u vous baignés
 Si est a chou senefijés.
 Tout droit ensi com l'enfechons
 Nes de pechiés ist fors del fons
 Quant de baptesme est aportés,
 Sire, tout ensement devés
 Issir sans nule vilonnie
 De cest baing, car chevalerie
 Se doit baignier en honesté,
 En cortoisie et en bonté,
 Et faire amer a toutes gens.'

L'Ordene de chevalerie, ed. cit., vv. 111-125. After the bath, the candidate is dried in a bed.

¹ The kyng maked hym knyght, and girde hym with a sworde, and kyssed hym & he weped sore that he myght not speke oon worde . . . , *Ed. cit.*, p. 20.

² *Ed. cit.*, p. 74.

³ *Ed. cit.*, p. 545. Here the kiss immediately follows the formula: 'Be thou a good Knight.'

Church ceremonies too seem to be disproportionately few in the romances, but it is entirely possible that some of the unspecified ceremonies were meant by the poets to be of that type.

All the important steps of the secular knighting are paralleled, it would appear, in actual usage. Investment with the sword, both in the romances and chronicles, is described as the basic act, although details as to the exact method of presenting the sword are lacking. No doubt, practice varied widely. Affixing the spurs, often described in the romances, is less frequently specified in the historical sources. Perhaps this act was not, in less pretentious *adoubements*, an invariable accompaniment of investment with the sword. The fist-blow and sword-tap — the two types of accolade — seem to be described in both the romances and the historical material, although most references to the *colée* are ambiguous with respect to the type that is meant. The formula — ‘Be thou a good knight,’ and the concluding feast and celebration are also paralleled by actual usage. In the English romances, little attention is given the ceremonial arming of the candidate in hauberk, greaves, helm, and the like, but incredibly extravagant dubbing gifts are common.

In practice, religious knightings probably varied from a long, highly symbolic procedure, similar to those outlined in the manuals of chivalry, to simple ceremonies taking place in a church, but involving a minimum addition to the basic acts of the secular ritual — investment with the sword, and the accolade. The bath and the drying of the candidate in a bed were refinements that were, no doubt, reserved for the elaborate rites that marked the initiation of princes and the highest born nobles in the thirteenth century and later. The vigil and the dedication of the sword were much more commonly the chief religious additions to the secular ceremony. Thus, the romance writers, since they portray distinctly, though infrequently, the vigil and the consecration of the sword, may be said to have depicted the more common practice. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to understand why the English romance writers seem completely to have overlooked the opportunities for descriptive color presented by the ritualistic bath, especially in view of the fact that it is fully represented in the Old French romances. The use of a kiss in place of the accolade, probably a late modification of the religious knighting, appears in only one romance.

It is of some significance that, of the two types, the secular court ritual is more frequently depicted in the romances. That is, it would seem that most of the English romances were composed before the period when the religious dubbing was in regular use. Nevertheless, as one of the older historians of chivalry has observed, the attempt to date the romances closely on the basis of the customs they portray is unsound, ‘for they were varied and improved by successive repetitions and transcriptions, and when they were rendered into prose still further changes were made in order to please the taste of the age.’¹

The departure from actual usage here found in the Middle English romances consists mainly in (1) a tendency to ignore the battlefield ceremony in favor of the more spectacular and honorable court ceremony; (2) a considerable over-

¹ Charles Mills, *op. cit.*, I, 97.

emphasis on dubbing gifts; and (3) the omission of any clear allusions to the ritualistic bath.

Although the descriptions in the romances and chronicles brought together here may scarcely be said to agree closely in the amount of detail which they accord to the process of knighting, it is plain that the above deviations are not of great importance. So far as the ceremony of knighting is concerned, then, the Middle English romances are, as Sainte-Palaye has said of the Old French poems, 'images de nos coutumes anciennes.'¹ The long sought essence of romance, whatever else it may be, does not consist of gross distortion or fanciful treatment of the facts of the knighting ritual.

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APPENDIX A

THE KNIGHTING OF GUY OF WALLINGFORD

- 385 Forthe then yede hym Gye
And chase to hym squyers twenty.
Into a chambur þey be goon,
There þey schulde be dubbed ychone.
Kyrtyls they had oon of sylke
- 390 Also whyte, as any mylke.
Of gode sylke and of purpull palle
Mantels above they caste all.
Hosys þey had vpon, but no schone;
Barefot they were euerychone.
- 395 But garlondys þey had of precyous stones
And perlys ryche for the noones.
When þey were þus yclede,
To a chaumbur the Erle hym yede.
A squyer broght newe brondys:
- 400 They toke þe poyntys in þer hondys.
They hangyd on euery swyrde hylte
A peyre of sporys newe gylte.
Before þe awter þey knelyd ychone,
Vnto mydnyght were all goone.
- 405 The Erle come anon ryghtys
And wyth hym two odor knyghtys.
The Erle seyde: 'lordyngys dere,
At thys nede helpe vs here.'
The knyghtys, þat were hende,
- 410 Knelyd to the awters ende.
The Erle, that was the thrydde,
Began all in the mydde.
At the furste to Gye he come,
Of the swyrde þe spurres he nome.
- 415 He set þe spurres on hys fote
And knelyd before hym, y wote,

¹ See Sainte-Palaye's discussion entitled 'Memoire concernant la lecture des anciens Romans de chevalerie,' *op. cit.*, II, 107-137.

And wyth the swyrde he hym gyrte
 Ryght abowte at hys herte
 And smote hym on þe neck a lytull wey3t
 420 And bad hym become a good kny3t.
 There were hys felowes euerychon
 Dubbed knyghtys be oon and oon.
 The Erle at morne a feste made:
 There were feele lordyngys glade.
 425 When þe knyghtys had etyn
 And at þe borde longe setyn,
 Vp they rose euerychone:
 To þe chaumbur be þey goone.¹

Julius Zupitza long ago observed that this remarkable descriptive passage has no antecedent either in the French original or the earlier English versions.² It may further be pointed out that no source or parallel seems to exist in the so-called manuals of chivalry or the chief chronicles of the period. Perhaps we should consider this passage an original interpolation based upon first-hand observation by the scribe or poet responsible for the Cambridge MS. of *Guy of Warwick*.

¹ *Ed. cit.*, vv. 385–428.

² See Zupitza's note in his edition of the Cambridge text, p. 352. The editor of the Old French *Gui de Warewic*, Professor Alfred Ewert of Oxford University, confirms Zupitza's statement in a recent letter to the present writer.